The Mermaid Conundrum

by

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Thump! Thump! ... Thump! Thump!
His heart beat like a big base drum in his ears.
It was a stupid thought, Jake was swimming Loch Ness, no sharks here. Not even Nessie.

Thump! Thump! … Thump! Thump!
But in the dark of the loch, when all you could hear was your own blood pumping and you could barely see five feet in front, the mind created phantasms to terrorize.

Jake had short curly copper hair, he had just turned 19 and this was his idea of a party, investigate rumours of sunken treasure at the bottom of the most famous loch in the world.

Thump! Thump! … Thump! Thump!

He released some air from a buoyancy aid and his weighted belt dragged him down into the deep.

Thump! Thump! … Thump! Thump!

After five minutes of falling he started to see signs of shipwrecks. The loch was a popular tourist attraction and sometimes tourists looking to spot Nessies got caught up in storms and had to abandon ship. A graveyard for the toys of the super rich. Jetskis and speedboats lying lifelessly at the bottom of the loch, nature slowly engulfing them.

Now Jake started to swim. He kicked with his flippers and headed towards the rusted hulk of a great fishing boat, that looked more promising. The swim took 3 minutes then Jake knocked on the door of the sunken vessel

Thump! Thump! … Thump! Thump!

Jake's blood chilled, he'd long since gotten over the sound of his heart beating.

Thump! Thump! … Thump! Thump!

He reached for the handle of the rusted door and turned it.

Thump! Thump! … Thump! Thump!

He rattled the door in disbelief, panic building within him.

Thump! Thump! … Thump! Thump!

He pulled a harpoon gun from his belt and took aim at the lock.

He pulled the trigger.

Whoosh!

Crash!

Jake dived through the open doorway and slammed the broken door shut from inside.

“Hello.” said a girl standing before him.

Thump! Thump! … Thump! Thump!

“Oh, that's Nessie” said the girl. “She likes to scratch herself on the wrecks down here. Do you want to go somewhere we can talk?”

Jake stared at the girl. She can't have been more than 14 and she was translucent like an ice lolly with the juice sucked out of it. He shrugged.
Sure I've just run from Nessie and now I'm talking to a ghost, why not go into her parlour?

The girl led him through a trapdoor into the basement.

“You can talk here.” she said.

Jake checked his oxygen meter, he had hours left. Then he pulled the oxygen rebreather from his mouth and said. “I can't breathe this, this is water. Wait! How am I talking?”

“This is magic water” said the girl “The mermaids make it. They make it so I can talk to my friends.”

Jake gagged. “I- I cannot believe this”

“But you're experiencing it!” cried the girl.

“I probably got concussion from firing the harpoon gun at close range” said Jake. “Or this could be carbon monoxide and I'm just having a very trippy death. Anyway who are you, ghost?”

“I am Lydia Silverstone. My parents own this yacht.” said Lydia.

“Okay...” said Jake leaning against the wall to try and steady the world. “And how did you die?”

Lydia thought long and hard, biting her lip as she did so then replied. “There was a man riding Nessie and he did a very bad thing.”

Jake almost laughed. “So a man riding a plesiosaur killed you. How?”

“He turned into a fine mist, floated over to us, then into us and possessed us.”

“So how come you're a ghost and your parents aren't?” snapped Jake.

“I don't know.” said Lydia. “Shall we find out?”

Now Jake stared at the Lydia. “You know where this man is?”

Lydia nodded “He lives with the mermaids, do you want me to show you?”

“Fuck it.” said Jake, preparing to reinsert the oxygen rebreather. “Why not go to see the demon possessing the land?”

The swim took hours, through crevices and wrecks, even through what Lydia called ‘soft spaces’

portals the mermaids using to navigate the place.

Jake did pause briefly outside the first soft space, recalling that quantum teleportation basically meant he would die upon entering the portal then be instantly cloned at the other end. Then figured that since he'd just seen a ghost it didn't matter either way.

Lydia led them to a vast area accessible only via soft spaces. It was a vast sink hole that went down further than the eye could see and the water seemed a very clear light blue. There was a grand sandy shore around the edge which is where Jake and Lydia ended up.

“This is astounding” said Jake, stripping off his scuba gear and taking deep breaths of fresh sea air.

“There are soft spaces all around here that keep the air fresh. You could live down here and never need to leave as the mermaids bring you food and water.” said Lydia.

“Oh, believe me I am going to go back home but I have to document this.” He brought out a video camera, removed it from its waterproof case and started filming.

A woman approached them from the sink hole, a pinstriped suit forming itself around her as she approached the pair.

“Ha!” barked Jake “Six impossible things before breakfast. Women rising from the water, clothes building themselves around them. What can I do for you my fair maiden? Is this the part where you dump me in a body bag to maintain the conspiracy? He he!”

“Far from it.” said the woman seriously. “I want you to save us.”

Jake baulked. “Hey, I'm just a tourist! I'm no eternal champion or chosen one. This is just a bit of fun.”

The woman stared at him and said quietly. “The man who told you about the treasure? Do you you remember what he looked like?”

“Well, he was tall, good looking, quite muscular, had a good strong chin and curly ginger hair.” Jake though for a moment. “Mother Flipper, he was me wasn't he? After I've got whatever magic is my prize. But why me though?”

The woman shrugged. “The plesiosaur don't want none unless you got buns and you've got the booty for the job.”

“You hired me for an incredibly dangerous mission because of my looks?” said Jake incredulously.

“Sucks, don't it?” said the woman “Now hurry up and get that we are in danger.”

“Fine.” said Jake with a sneer. “I will.”

As Jake gathered up his stuff and started getting dressed in his scuba gear again the woman pulled a trident from thin air and waved her hand over it, enchanting it with words of power. Then she handed the trident to Jake. “This will help you on your journey.”

“What is it? A +1 Trident of Fish Command?” said Jake jokingly.

The woman nodded. “I suggest you use it only when absolutely necessary.”

“Uhuh and what are you going to do?”

The woman shrugged. “I'm going to meet you?”

Jake laughed then pulled on the last of his scuba gear and waded into the water.

Lydia paused and asked the woman. “What's your name?”

“Lucy” said the woman before stepping through a soft space.

Jake had an idea as he descended into the water. He removed his rebreather from his mouth and said “Test.” then punched the water and cried “Yes! Magic mermaid water Bitch!” Then he took a step and jumped into the void.

He plummeted for half an hour, watching schools of fish and mermaids swim off in the distance. Passing by colonies of coral and fish. Then he heard screaming coming from below as the sinkhole started to widen out.

He readied his harpoon gun took careful aim, doing calculations based on the speed of his falling and the widening out of the sink hole until at last he took the shot.

Whoosh!

The harpoon embedded itself in the edge of the sink hole just as it widened out into a simply humongous underwater cavern.

He waited nervously for a few seconds as titanium cable spooled out of his gun.

He pressed the recall button.

Whoosh!

Jake rocketed towards his intended destination and just before he cracked his head on the ceiling he detonated the explosive bolts keeping the harpoon connected to the gun cable. Jake narrowly passed beneath the ceiling, readied a new harpoon in his gun then stowed it, holding his trident straight ahead of him.

Time for more calculations.

Lydia appeared at the source of the screaming. A small blonde mermaid was defending a school children mermaids from five sharks, each the size of a bike.

Lydia asked. “What's wrong?”

The heroic mermaid cried “What's wrong is that our supreme overlord decided it would be fun to turn a handful of leeches into gigantic bloodthirsty sharks!”

Lydia nodded. “I can see how that would be annoying”

A shark zoomed out of the void to charge at the mermaid when Jake impaled it with his trident.

“Hear me!” boomed Jake. “You are now my loyal subjects! You will obey me! Cease your destructive tendencies, leave the mermaids alone and follow me! I may let you live.”

“Wow.” said the blonde mermaid. “You just saved my life.”

“All part of the job.” said Jake suavely, yanking the trident free from the now dead shark “Especially for a lady as delightful as -?”

“Lucy, my name's Lucy, what's yours?”

Jake laughed. “They call me the chosen one. Now tell me about this dark lord that has been terrorising the mermaids”

“Oh, he's horrible” said Lucy, leading Jake towards the local inn.

Five hours later Jake exited, slightly inebriated with a special amulet around his neck.

“S-so let me get this straight. The all powerful penis is called his slickness and he can control the very subatomic positioning of his body allowing him to be or do anything.”

“Like a god” confirmed Lucy

“Like a god, right? And all I have to help me kill him is this fancy amulet and the trident?”

“That's about the size of it yes. Oh but don't forget the amulet makes you immune to his tricks and lets you kill him.”

“Neat.” said Jake. “Let's go kill me a dark lord.”

He bunged his trident on the ground. “Ahem! Fishies!”

The sharks that were attacking Lucy regrouppe before Jake.

“Excellent!” said Jake, then he shot each shark with a harpoon in ture, using some extra cable to keep all five sharks attached to him.

“Nice work.” said Lucy admiringly.

“Well, get on then.” said Jake.

Lucy swam behind his back then flung her arms about his waist.

Jake banged his trident on the ground. “Mush, mush, boys! Let's go hunting some demon dick.”

Whoosh!

Jake and Lucy were dragged along at high speed to an ominous black tower in the distance.

“You know you really shouldn't swear around children.” said Lucy sternly.

“She's fucking dead!” cried Jake incredulously “What am I gonna do? Open her naive innocence to

the evil of the world. Besides she's fricking 14, she probably swore more than me even before being reincarnated as a corpsicle”

Lucy stifled a giggle.

The journey to the tower took half an hour and Lucy started dozing.

“How can a woman doze on a final flight to rid the world of the scourge of all evil. Tsk. Honestly some people.” muttered Jake.

Five hundred meters from the tower Jake woke Lucy up.

The tower was large and foreboding with loads of gates, chains and barbs.

“I think I see a way in.” said Lucy, pointing to a window that was merely very dark brown, not black.

Jake barked a laugh. “Heh, I've always wanted to say this”

Lucy, laughed and said with Jake. “Looks like we gotta go, intruder window”

The sharks banked and tilted, following their instructions leading their masters towards the window.

Jake raised his harpoon gun and fired.

The glass shattered.

The sharks swam in and Jake reloaded his harpoon.

The sharks led the couple though an ornate dining hall, past living rooms and a tennis court towards a large throne room.

Jake released the sharks and together he and Lucy approached the throne room.

Inside the throne room sat a bald man in a black suit upon a mighty throne. He was eating a deep fried mermaid.

Lucy vomited.

Jake spat. “I guess that means it's dinner time.”

He aimed the harpoon and fired!

Whoosh!

The sharks swam to dine on the dark lord's twitching corpse.

“Tut, tut, tut. They really don't make eternal champions like they used to do they?”

Jake turned to see the bald man in the black suit, step out of the shadows behind him and hold Lucy hostage.

“I know, not very politically correct holding the love interest hostage but it's effective. Now tell me who sent you? Who could possibly have the power to try and dethrone me.”

“Me apparently.” said Jake.

The villain laughed. “No, really. Who sent you?”

“I sent me, it's a time travel thing.” said Jake.

“Time travel is impossible.” said the villain bluntly.

Jake couldn't help laughing at that. “You're a dark lord who can alter his molecular make up and possess people, there's a secret colony of mermaids with teleportation abilities living in a vast cave system of breathable water beneath Scotland and this all started when I met a ghost!”

The villain twitched nervously, hardly daring to whisper. “Ghost?”

Jake cried. “The only bit of this that is in any way possible is the timetravel! So why don't you get off your god damned high horse and admit that I am the man chosen to destroy you!”

“Because I am not just the oil slick controlling these mermaids. I am the Bam-Kursh, only the Farsh-nuke can destroy me!”

“Is that a fact?” asked Jake.

“Yes, it is a fact!” snapped the Bam-Kursh. “Now obey me or she dies.”

“Ha ha.” said Jake. “I've just thought of something”

Jake banged the trident on the ground. “Kill the slick! Kill the Bam-Kursh!”

The Bam-Kursh's eyes went wide and he threw Lucy across the room.

“+1 Trident of Fish Command” said Jake. “And mermaids are part fish. You better run, boy.”

The Bam-Kursh phased through the walls of the castle only to find Lydia standing before him.

Lydia asked. “Excuse me Mister, do you know why my Mummy and Daddy aren't ghosts too?”

The Bam-Kursh froze, realisation dawning. “Your father was the Farsh-nuke. He killed you to save you from what I did to him and in that moment he must have passed on his essence.”

Lydia thought for a moment then asked. “Does that mean I am the only one allowed to destroy you?”

“Shit.” said the Bam-Kursh.

Lydia reached her ghostly hand inside the Bam-Kursh's chest.

The Bam-Kursh saw Jake and Lucy standing behind Lydia now. “So that's why you're here, Jake. When I'm near you I'm locked into this form. I'm mortal.”

Jake nodded. “Dibs on your soul by the way.”

Lucy just glared at the Bam-Kursh.

Lydia closed her hand around the Bam-Kursh's heart and pulled. It burst from the Bam-Kursh's chest and the sharks feasted on his body.

“So what now?” asked Lucy.

“Eat this” said Lydia, holding up the heart.

“Gross.” said Jake as he took the heart. “The things I do for unimaginable power.”

He shoved the heart into his mouth and chewed. He chewed until it was a fine paste and swallowed.

“That was rank” said Jake,

A violent force spread Jake's arms out beside him as he vomited a great beam of pitch black evil into the void.

“This is the quickening.” said Lydia. “The powers of the Farsh-nuke, the Bam-Kursh and the slick are becoming his.”

“Neat.” said Lucy.

After five minutes the eruption stopped and Jake collapsed.

Lucy bent over him, hurriedly checking him for lifesigns.

By now the mermaids that Jake had sent to destroy the dark lord had arrived.

Lucy said. “I can explain everything but get him to my house”

The mermaids helped Jake over to Lucy's house.

Over the next week Lucy stayed by Jake's bedside as much as possible as physicians studied his condition but couldn't do anything more for him.

When at last Jake did awaken he felt very weird. He got off the bed and walked to the bathroom where he recognised the man who had sent him on this quest. He tested out his strength with a workout then had a wash and got some food before remembering he had just killed the dark lord and was now super powered.

Lucy was woken from her slumber beside Jake's bed by the sound of the fabric of reality being rend asunder.

“You have got to be kidding me?” she said as a free standing door appeared before her, she opened it and swam through only to collapse on the floor, gasping for air.

“Shit! I forgot you were a fish.” said Jake rushing over to Lucy's side.

Lucy choked. “What is this place?”

“Hush.” said Jake, then he placed a hand on Lucy's chest and muttered something.

Lucy took a deep breath. “How? What?”

“Do you like it?” said Jake, helping Lucy to to her feet. “This is how the Farsh-nuke and Bam-Kursh travel. So what do you think? Wanna travel the multiverse ridding the world of evil? I hear there's a lot it.”

Lucy looked down, overwhelmed then did a double take. “Jake, why do I have legs?”

“I made you into a human to stop you dying. I can turn you into a Jaguar if you prefer?”

“No, this'll do but can I please have control over my transformations from now on?” said Lucy.

“Of course.” said Jake.

Lucy smiled. “In that case, I accept.”

“Brilliant.” said Jake. “because I've decided that I rather love you and we could make a great team”

Lucy nodded. “And you do have a nice arse.”

The End